



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

INCREASE FUNDING TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY IN NEW YORK CITY

Students with physical disabilities often have difficulty finding school buildings that they can access.

- » 3 of the City's 32 community school districts currently have **no fully accessible elementary schools** (Districts 12, 16, and 21).
- » 4 districts have **no fully accessible middle schools** (7, 14, 16, and 32).
- » 6 districts have **no fully accessible high schools** (14, 16, 18, 20, 21, and 32).

Given the lack of fully accessible schools, the DOE relies on "partially accessible" schools to serve students with accessibility needs. However, these schools often are inaccessible in significant ways. For example, some of these schools have no working elevators. Others have cafeterias, science labs, bathrooms, libraries, and auditorium stages that can't accommodate people who use wheelchairs.

As a result, families have limited options when applying to pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school programs. Students often end up traveling far longer distances for school than their peers without accessibility needs. Families need to make difficult compromises regarding school curriculum and programming because there are so few accessible school options.

Furthermore, when families match with schools that could be made accessible through relatively minor renovations or accommodations, these renovations often do not happen in a timely way due to the lack of funding allocated for this purpose.

CURRENT FUNDING

The 2015-2019 Capital Plan allocates \$100 million for improving school accessibility and \$28 million for ensuring that a number of schools can serve as accessible emergency shelters. Together, that represents **less than one percent** of the total funding in the Plan. Furthermore, the City has already spent the vast majority of this funding, leaving little, if any, funding for accessibility projects in the coming year.

FY 2019 FUNDING REQUEST

The City Council's Response to the FY 19 Preliminary Budget recommends an investment of an additional **\$125 million** to increase the number of accessible schools. Unfortunately, the FY 19 Executive Budget does not include this funding. We recommend that the final FY 19 budget include:

- » **\$100 million to make another 15-17 additional schools fully accessible** and to improve the accessibility of additional schools through minor renovation projects. These may include, for example, the addition of a ramp to enable entry to the building by all, a lift so students can get onto auditorium stages, and bathroom renovations.
- » **\$25 million for a fund to facilitate families' requests for minor renovations and accommodations** in school buildings based on individual accessibility needs.

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